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AUTHOR Simsek, Hasan; Balci, Ayse
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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the perceptions of various stakeholders concerning the current and future roles and functions of the Middle East Technical University (METU), a leading large public university in Turkey. The data used in this paper were derived from a larger research project that was designed to assess the quality of various dimensions of METU. Personal interviews with a semi-structured format were conducted with a randomly selected group of 80 individuals representing faculty members, students, administrators, graduates, parents, and managers of public and private agencies were conducted. Overall, the study found that in the three domains of teaching, research, and service, METU was seen as adhering to the typical university in the West. Teaching was rated as the primary current function of the university by most respondents. However, interviewees' expectations on the university's future functions rates the three domains almost equally. Interviewees also ascribed to the university the additional roles of providing leadership in economic and social development, in international or global orientation, and in student character formation and development. (Contains 29 references.) (Author/JLS)

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CURRENT AND FUTURE MISSION OF A LEADING TURKISH PUBLIC UNIVERSITY FROM THE PERSPECTIVES OF VARIOUS INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

Hasan Simsek
Associate Professor and Assistant Dean
Middle East Technical University
Faculty of Education
06531 Ankara, Turkey
Phone: 90 (312) 210-4002
Fax: 90 (312) 210-1112
E-mail: simsek@tutor.fedu.metu.edu.tr

Ayse Balci
Research Assistant
Middle East Technical University
Faculty of Education
06531 Ankara, Turkey
Phone: 90 (312) 210 4046
Fax: 90 (312) 210-1254
E-mail: a10809@tutor.fedu.metu.edu.tr

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Abstract

The data used in this paper are derived from a larger research project that was designed to assess the quality of various dimensions of the Middle East Technical University (METU), a leading large, public university, in Turkey. By using a qualitative research design, this study reports the findings on the perceptions of a randomly selected group of faculty members, students, administrators, graduates, parents, and managers of public and private agencies on current and future roles or functions of the Middle East Technical University. Findings of the study indicate that in three domains, METU is seen no different than any typical university in the West, that is, it adheres to traditional/universal functions of a typical modern university: teaching, research, and service. In addition to these, interviewees ascribe three more functions to the university: a leading role for the economic and social development, an international or global orientation and student character development or formation.

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Hasan Simsek
Ayse Balci
Middle East Technical University
Faculty of Education
06531 Ankara, Turkey

What is the idea, the ideal, the concept of a university? This is the fundamental question that has been debated for over nine centuries since the creation of universities of Bologna, Paris and Oxford. Scholars and philosophers seem to take a more theoretical approach and write about the idea or ideal, mission or function, while leaders and practitioners of university administration and governance refer more to the purpose, the role, the tasks, the uses of the university (Michaud,1991,p.45).

In order to understand how universities acquired their contemporary missions and to foresee what changes may be coming in the near future, it is important to overview how their missions evolved.

University in 20th Century

Rüegg (1992) reports, in the origin of the universities at the end of the 12th century, there were two fundamental expectations: (1) The universities were expected to engage in fundamental discovery as well as criticizing and extending the traditional view of the world,(2) they had to train persons who would enter the intellectual-practical professions to deal, in an intellectually disciplined way, with social and political problems.

Especially in the West, through the secularization of state and separation of universities from the religious order (Simsek and Heydinger, 1993; Heydinger and Simsek, 1992), the modern age has sought three basic functions to universities: research, teaching, and service.

Similar to other contemporary social organizations, the ''university'' concept has shown a phenomenal evolution in its position in modern societies. "The university as an institution has escaped restriction by the university as an idea. If it had not been able freely to adapt -to succeeding socio-economic orders, to radical shifts in science and intellectual culture, it would have long ago passed into history. That it has not done so, that in the late 20th century the university remains a powerful and pervasive institutional form, not just in the West but throughout the world" (Scott, 1993, p. 4).

In their study on European and French universities, Martin and Verdaguer (1995) argued that higher education, nowadays, must be viewed as a useful, high level, yet mass produced education, including higher vocational training and continuing education, and research including applied research and R&D. In addition to these, universities also carry out other functions such as "...consultation services, technology transfer, and the incubation or nursing of new industrial and business firms" (Martin and Verdaguer, 1995, p. 25).

In explaining the Partnership University model, Stauffer adds a fourth function to the classical three functions of modern universities in the 1990s, namely regional economic and cultural development. "This means that the university's leadership is publicly visible on behalf of economic and cultural development, such as by serving on citizen boards, putting together economic development mechanisms, offering help to

regional business leaders to attract new jobs to the area, and encouraging the visual and performing arts" (Stauffer, 1990, p. 21).

According to Smilor, Dietrich and Gibson, the American university, for example, is transforming itself. The entrepreneurial university is emerging out of the classical roles of research, teaching and service. The essence of the entrepreneurial university is the direct involvement of universities "in the commercialization of research activities, a more proactive approach to regional economic development, a more problem-solving and data-driven approach to curriculum development, and a new emphasis on applying the principles of total quality management to university operations" (Smilor, Dietrich and Gibson, 1993, p. 1).

Besides these perspectives which ascribe some new and non-traditional roles to universities, some others believe that the university is still the same entity which was defined by Wilhelm von Humboldt 180 years ago:

> "Humboldt conceived of the university as an institution of research and teaching... He very explicitly declared the unity of teaching and research... He did not think that a university was either a machine for producing professional persons -lawyers, civil servants, engineers and physicians- for which there was an effective demand, or for turning out scientific knowledge. He thought that fundamental to both of these was the cultivation of the ideal of the pursuit of truth and the ordering of life around that pursuit... Study in a university, in the presence of persons teaching, studying and investigating a large variety of subjects, helps to precipitate and maintain the academic and scientific ethos. One of the main functions of the university is to instill the academic and the scientific ethos" (Shils, 1992,p.301-312).

University in the Next Century

Michaud (1991) argues that the modern university can be explained with three basic mission involving six different functions:

1. Intellectual mission that involves teaching and research functions

2. Social mission that involves vocational and service functions

3. Educational mission that involves cultural and humanist functions

However, according to Michaud (1991), none of these functions are watertight. This tripartite functioning has never been perfectly achieved. Today, the Western World is in the process of redefining the basic mission of the university as a response to accumulated problems of heavy reliance on one or two of these functions and to the pressures of emerging Information Age. For example, some are very critical of the modern universities as being too drifted from teaching and too relied on research (Boyer, 1990; Heydinger and Simsek, 1992). On the contrary, people portray a different university in the coming age of postindustrial environments. Recent attempts defining the idea of university in the 21st century basically look at the conditions stemming from both external and internal dynamics that are shaping the system such as changing sociocultural context, demographic shifts, international competition as well as cooperation, technological change, influence of public perceptions, shifts in expectations and values of the constituencies of the university (Fincher,1993; Scott,1993; Rüegg,1992).

For example, Rüegg proposes that the various demands which the university will encounter in the twenty-first century will be variants of the two demands which have confronted universities since their very beginnings. "The universities in the twenty-first century will continue to develop only if they adhere to the fundamental intellectual and moral traditions which have been alive in them ever since their first establishment and which have enabled them to perform central services for their respective societies, while at the same time, maintaining themselves as centers of discovery and learning" (Rüegg (1992, p.192).

After a historical analysis of universities, Aitkin states that "some universities will become known as research institutes which also do some teaching; some will become known as teaching institutes where some research is also done. There will be a wide range in the mixture of research and teaching which is seen to be appropriate for an institution which is called a *university*" (Aitkin, 1991, p. 244-245).

Casper (1996) is more interested in not what universities are supposed to do or what are the things that should be done in universities, but what the university really does or what is really done in universities. He finds the following list: education and professional training, conferring credentials, social integration, furthering the process of coming of age, of growing up, the assessment and creation of knowledge, the transfer of knowledge, selection of academic elites and peer review. On whether or not these roles will remain in the next century, he states the following:

> "In addition to the 'information industry', a 'knowledge industry' will develop- and is indeed lurking around the corner... Software producers may well become competitors of universities... The continuing education business for professionals, with its heavy reliance on the new media, in the future will not necessarily be restricted to continuing education... CD-ROMs will soon rob teachers of their power because students will have instant access to everything teachers know... The Internet will make it unnecessary for students to travel long distances... The main question is this: will technological substitution be complete, or will the university as a physical space continue to attract students? ...The university as a physical space will remain attractive to the extent that we make it more valuable to people to interact personally and face to face in learning and research. Ironically, our future may lie in going back to the pre-university Socratic gymnasium as our main model of discourse" (Casper, 1996, pp. 71, 83)

University in the Developing World

The contemporary mission of university as it evolved in the West has widely been accepted by developing and less developed countries of the world as well. However, the mission of university in these countries is significantly limited only to the teaching

function. To a great extent, these countries are usually identified with a high population increase, and a high proportion of this population is composed of young people in need of higher education opportunities. Secondly, these countries do not have necessary human and material resources to carry out research, and, an effective link between the university and the labor market is not evident. As a result, typical universities in the developing world are primarily teaching institutions.

Rarely though, as in Turkey, various developing countries founded and strongly supported one or two universities that could provide high level skilled manpower, technicians and engineers needed for economic development.

On the other hand, Van Den Bor and Shute (1991, pp.1-2) argue that universities in the developing world are different from the universities in the industrialized world: "although there is a great diversity of universities in the developing world in terms of size, management and resource base, they exhibit characteristics distinguishing them from their sister institutions in the industrialized countries ...Developing nations have invested heavily in higher education. 'Most have built universities modeled on higher education in the former colonizing nations; others have realized from the beginning that a national system of higher education should be attuned to national and/or regional manpower and social demands."

In developing countries, universities are considered by governments as an engine in the process of nation-building and an instrument for national development. By the same token, university education is considered by students in these countries as a way of upward mobility.

University in Turkey and the Middle East Technical University

Lack of qualified faculty members, scarcity in resources, inefficient use of existing resources, high increase in student numbers were stated as problematic areas in higher education in Turkey. Quality at each level of higher education and production of scientific knowledge and technology are perceived as primary problems of the Turkish higher education today. The following set of remedies are proposed to cure the problems of Turkish higher education: graduate education should be strengthened, the burden of expensive foreign education for training academicians should be shifted to highly developed Turkish universities, personnel policies and performance measures should be clarified for faculty members, public finance patterns should be diversifies for public institutions, universities need to be given autonomy in administrative and financial matters (Guruz, et.al. 1994).

The Middle East Technical University (METU) located in the Turkish capitol, Ankara, is one of the 68 publicly funded Turkish universities. It was founded in 1956 with the idea that housing and planning conditions in Turkey needed qualified technicians trained in these professions. So, it was founded under the name of Institute of City Planning and High Technology with 36 students and 4 instructors. One of its founding goals was to create an institution that could serve the whole Middle East region which is why English became the language of the institution. As a result, many international students from 54 different countries have received undergraduate as well as graduate degrees from the institution.

In October 1957, it gained university status with several technical departments: Mechanical, Civil, Electrical and Chemical Engineering. Between the years 1957 and 1963, the METU campus was consisted of temporary buildings in the city. Its current

campus, originally planned to meet the needs of 12,000 students, was put in service in 1963. Over the years, its growth has been phenomenal in terms of number of students, faculty, personnel and facilities, and, has been one of the several highly repudiated universities in Turkey. The success can be attributed to such factors as English instruction, qualified academicians, country and region specific research facilities.

METU has established close contacts with other universities around the world and has many joint research projects, and international faculty and student exchange programs. Compared to other Turkish universities, it has facilities of the highest quality such as 35 research centers, a library of 275,310 books and 119,000 bound periodicals, computer center with campus-wide extensive networking capabilities, connecting the institution to world wide Internet as well as to national research network. Being a campus located outskirts of metropolitan Ankara and having high quality sports and recreational facilities, housing and dormitories for academicians and students, it is identified with a strong METU culture, and a lively social environment.

Up to 1982, it was governed by a board of trustees and had a substantial degree of autonomy. This administrative style was apparently borrowed from the U.S. universities, and was the only higher education institution with this special status defined by law. However, with the establishment of Higher Education Council (HEC) in 1982, it was put under a centralized machinery of HEC. Many provisions in the HEC's law were opposed by academicians since they perceived them potential threats to academic freedom and autonomy. Consequently, many of them left the University. Moreover, curricular changes imposed by HEC coupled with a capacity increase after 1982 created quality concerns, especially at the undergraduate level. For example, the number of students reached 17,000 in 1984, and 22,000 in 1992.

Within the past 40 years since its foundation, METU has awarded 40,000 undergraduate, 8000 Master's and only 565 doctoral degrees. The University is employing 2,011 academic personnel. The number of graduate students was 2,781 in 1994, and it has been increased to 3,314, around 20% increase in just one academic year consistent with the President's shift of focus from undergraduate to graduate education.

On the other hand, as articulated by the President in his opening speech for 1993-94 academic year, faculty at METU carried out 1/3 of all basic and applied research studies (except Health Sciences) in the nation, arranged, 1/3 of international congress, conferences and seminars in 1992. In addition, they produced approximately 1/3 of all international publications nationwide. In spite of these, the University's budget was only 1/25 of the source being distributed to existing 68 state universities. Moreover, the salary of faculty members working at METU is less than half that of those working in private universities. Also private universities with better research facilities, higher income and accommodation, have become an alternative for faculty members experiencing financial difficulties at the University. Consequently, it became difficult for METU to recruit and to maintain good faculty members.

The university has lost its financial capacity in its establishment years and could not preserve its traditional attractiveness in the eyes of successful and brilliant young scholars. Consequently, the University has come to a position of loosing its dynamism' (Süha Sevük, Parlar Foundation Award Ceremony, 1992). As the total number of state universities has risen from 29 to 68, it is unfortunately clear that METU's share from state resources will dramatically decrease in the coming years.

The environment dramatically changed for the University in the mid 1980s as the new private universities entered the scene. First, The Bilkent University was founded in

1986 in Ankara just two miles west of METU. Its founding principles were almost the same of the METU's founding principles: English instruction, quality faculty who teach and write in English, international publication, technical/engineering fields and research emphasis. Since the early 1990s, other private universities followed the suit on almost the same principles: Koc University in Istanbul founded by Turkey's largest corporation, Galatasaray University, and Sabanci University which will be operating soon founded by the country's second largest corporation, Sabanci Corporation.

Despite all these problems, and, although it is a state university, METU has always been present in the competition for national leadership and international recognition. Moreover, it is striving to continue to be a leading higher education institution with the orientation toward research and graduate education.

In 1992, when the President took office, he started a reform initiative and defined the mission of the university as to have graduates who are able to compete at international level, to give support to industry, and to contribute to the advancement of science at universal standards. He succeeded in convincing HEC that METU must change and emphasized that the university experiences quality deterioration in many domains (student, faculty, facilities, research and teaching), it has grown exceedingly in size, and has lost the leading role for the country.

In general, there is an increasing demand for higher education in Turkey. Many parents expect their children to become university graduates. They are concerned that their children get a good higher education, one that will allow them to obtain higher qualifications and well-paid jobs. Governments are interested in the output of education as trained labor power. Employers are concerned with the quality of contemporary education and whether it provides suitable recruits for their enterprises. Therefore there

occurs a gap between high expectations and supply for this increasing demand. Within this context, it becomes a crucial issue to explore what METU is and what it should be in the future from the perspectives of its most important stakeholders: faculty members, students, administrators, graduates, parents, and managers of public and private agencies.

To do this, the following two research questions guided the data collection and analysis processes:

(1). What are the perceptions of different stakeholders (faculty members, students, administrators, graduates, parents, and managers of public and private agencies) on the current mission and functions of a leading public university, METU, in Turkey?

(2). What are the perceptions of different stakeholders (faculty members, students, administrators, graduates, parents, and managers of public and private agencies) on the future mission and functions of METU? In other words, where should this university go in terms of its basic mission and functions?

Method

As stated earlier, the data used in this paper were collected as part of a larger research project that was designed to assess institutional quality in various domains. In order to collect data on current and future mission and institutional functions of the university, two research questions were designed: 1) From your own point of view, what do you think are the most important mission or functions that the Middle East Technical University is identified with? What do you think this university is doing mainly? 2) From your own point of view, what do think should be the most important mission or functions of this university? What do you think this university should be doing mainly?

The research design included total of 80 individuals. These individuals represented the following stakeholders: 3 of total 5 college deans, 5 department heads, 10 faculty members from different colleges and disciplines; 12 administrative personnel, 12 students representing five different colleges and departments, 7 unit heads, high level administrator from 18 public and private agencies that hire the most METU graduates, 7 graduates of the university, and 4 parents whose children are currently at the university. A clustered random sampling was used to form the sample.

These individuals were first informed by a letter about the research followed by telephone contacts. Personal interviews were used to collect data A semi-structured interview technique was used. A typical interview ran about 45 minutes, and interviews were tape recorded. Each recorded interview was later verbatim transcribed by a professional typist. The interview data were subjected to content analysis (Paten, 1987; Miles and Huberman, 1994). The researchers first coded all the data using a predefined set of categories which are roughly equivalent to the research questions presented earlier. The researchers coded the data both deductively and inductively. Both researchers went through all the notes to check each other's coding, and this process established consistently in the assignment of codes to the same phenomenon. Second, the descriptive codes were grouped in categories which fit together meaningfully. These categories allowed to identify the main themes present in the data. Third, by using thematic codes, the interview data were examined again and restructured according to these themes. Then, a third level thematic coding was carried out to determine the general descriptive themes for the data.

Results

1) Current Mission and Functions of the University: Analysis of data reveals that all the groups see the Middle East Technical University as a predominantly teaching institution (around 54% of all interviewees). Following, the interviewees see the research function as the second most important function in the university (20%) followed by international relations (11%), a pioneering or leading role (9%) and service function (6%).

Teaching is one of the primary roles of modern universities today. However, our results indicate that the majority of the stakeholders of this university ascribe a teaching role to the university so far that teaching seems the one and the only function of the university. However, we know that METU has the highest potential among Turkish universities for research. Service function, on the other hand, was rated the least important function of the university by the internal and external stakeholders. During the interviews, most of the insiders and outsiders we interviewed spoke about the university being too distant from the realities of the country, too distant from technology and knowledge transfer to the related sectors of the economy and industry, too distant from the social problems of the country. They rather wanted to see the university more active in these domains in terms of providing solutions to the problems of different kinds the Turkish society struggles with.

The question of why the teaching function was rated highest by the interviewees deserves attention. Many interviewed individuals, especially informed stakeholders such as faculty members and administrators, admit that the loss of autonomy with the establishment of Higher Education Council in 1983 has increased the tendency towards a severe centralization which gave way for establishing channels for political intrusion and interference by the governments in operation of universities. A great majority of the

interviewed people agree that unsubstiated increase in number of students admitted to the University with the pressure from the Higher Education Council, indirectly by the government, has doubled the student population in the university without any significant betterment of facilities, human and other resources. For example, the student population was about 12,000 before the establishment of the Higher Education Council in 1982. It was increased to 17,000 in 1984 and 22,000 in 1992. This finding is interesting in the sense that it provides an additional evidence to an inverse relationship between size and quality as observed in higher education sector of other (developed) countries (Mayhew, Ford and Hubbard, 1990; Simsek and Louis, 1994).

Internal groups such as students and academicians mentioned that although the university has largely been a teaching institution in recent years, conditions of teaching are largely inadequate: Crowded classrooms, poor advising system, inadequate infrastructure of physical facilities, and dehumanizing university atmosphere are some of the problem areas associated with the quality of teaching. What this means is that being a teaching institution does not guarantee a high quality teaching performance for a university. By the recognition of these difficulties, current president of the university who now serves in his second term initiated a restructuring in 1993 in some areas on the university such as reducing the undergraduate population to enhance teaching quality as well as to strengthen the graduate level and research (Simsek and Aytemiz, 1996).

On the other hand, from the perceptions of groups the university has lost its most traditional features such as its international character in the region, a pioneering role for which it was initially founded to train high level professionals especially in engineering, and its campus atmosphere which used to be democratic and egalitarian. Many people from internal and external interest groups think that the university has turned itself into an

ivory tower. Especially the university's faculty members think that the university should renew its original commitment of being an international university in the region and of raising graduates especially in critical and emerging areas of science and technology. This need was also mentioned in another study done by Guruz et.al. (1994, p. 188) that Turkey is in a critical need of qualified people in electronics, biotechnology, molecular technology, informatics, fotonics, robotics, ceramics and composite materials.

2). Future (Ideal) Mission and Functions of the University: Interviewees' expectations on the future functions of the university are different from the current situation. There is an almost even distribution of three typical functions akin to a higher education institution. Namely, around one fourth of the interviewed people think that the university should give priority to teaching, however, with a strong emphasis on a democratic teaching-learning atmosphere, that is a democratic, free, participative teaching-learning climate which is not isolated from societal problems. As we mentioned earlier, a perceived quality deterioration in teaching may have been remedied partly by creating a more democratic and participative teaching-learning environment.

To us, by recognizing this problem, the current university administration started a restructuring plan in 1993. The first target was the problem of large student body, more emphasis on teaching and quality decline in undergraduate level (Middle East Technical University, Draft Strategic Plan 1995-2000). The administration achieved to convince the Higher Education Council to reduce the number of undergraduate population in favor of more graduate students which will strengthen the research function as well. From this, it is our understanding that the university administration is clearly trying to alter the role, mission and function of the Middle East Technical University from a teaching institution to an elite research institution as it was explicitly articulated by the president in various public circumstances.

Second, pioneer or the leader role of METU (14%) becomes significant with a complementary role of international relations (13%). The interviewees observe that to cope with the kinds of global and regional changes, METU should be an opening gate to the world, a reinvention of its original mission applied to the conditions of the 1990s. As in the case of many institutional restructuring efforts in many countries, globalization is the buzzword here as well. Not only the business or industry is getting international and global, universities also try to exploit this opportunity to renew their basic mission and function in a changing world. It may seem that observers whom we interviewed may be too ambitious about the university, but they do this for all the right reasons. METU proved its potential during the late 1960s and 1970s by being the only English instruction public institution with its high quality graduates who have impressed employers with their self-confidence, field knowledge and creativity. The university was used to employ the best academicians who were trained abroad. As a result, it really became a university tradition as the President of Turkey, Suleyman Demirel, calls it "one of the ten great achievements of the Republic" since its foundation in 1923. So, as one of the interviewees remarked, "this tradition has been damaged and weakened by the policies of the last decade, but this university is still very important and it still holds a great potential, the problem is to revitalize its original innovative, pioneering mission and role for the country."

What we called pioneering or leading role for the university is interestingly raised other parts of the world with different labeling. For example, Stauffer (1990) wrote about partnership universities by stating that "at partnership universities, regional economic and cultural development is a fourth institutional function after teaching, research, and service." Then, he names the following universities in the US as typical partnership universities: George Mason University, the University of Houston at Clear Lake, the University of Central Florida, Miami-Dade Community College District, the University of California at Irvine, and the University of Texas at Dallas (Stauffer 1990, p. 24). Such voices are also heard elsewhere as Ginkel (1995, p.

16) reported that "university plays and should continue to play an important role in the competitiveness of Europe."

Of the international character, METU was the only university where instruction was in English until the mid 1970s. This special status was given to METU by law. This has made the university the only higher education institution[1] where a sizable number of foreign academicians and a considerable number of international students from the Middle Eastern, African, Asian and East Asian countries. On top of this, as reported in the university president's opening speech of the 1993-94 academic year, METU faculty arranged 1/3 of all international congress, conferences and seminars (among more than 50 universities in the same year), produced about 1/3 of all international publications nationwide. From these figures, internal and external observers of the university would like this trend continue even further and stronger in the age of globalization.

Third, the interviewed group reported that the University should emphasize the service role (13%) followed by research (9%). From this, we can say that people would like to see METU as a place which is associated with production as well as transfer of knowledge. There is one exception to this: Employers (public and private institutions and organizations which employ the highest number of METU graduates) reported that service function currently is the least emphasized role of METU as they perceive it. For future mission and role definition, most of them rated service as the second important function of METU after teaching. They expect the university to create conditions for knowledge and technology transfer, and to closely align its education process with the production.

Considering the targets specified in the METU's Strategic Plan (1995-2000) by the current administration, overall analysis of the findings yields that a public university in Turkey is no different than a university in an industrialized country in the sense that the new economic, social and international realities force universities to

[1] Until the Robert College in Istanbul was turned into a full-fledged university and was given the name of Bosphorus University in 1973.

redefine their basic functions. Interestingly, such buzzwords as globalism and information age seem also shape the opinions of stakeholders in developing countries. It will be an even more challenging issue how higher education institutions in these countries will tackle this problem with all the inherent country-specific limitations (less resources, autonomy problem, and ever increasing population demanding higher education).

Character Development

We created a new subtitle for this, because our data are significant in this respect. It was interesting for us to detect over and over that many internal and external stakeholders ascribed another totally different mission to the university besides teaching, research, service, leading role and internationalism: Character development or formation. This, of course, has close association with the teaching function of the university, but we think the content or what is meant by character development exceeds it. A great majority of especially employers, academicians and administrative personnel thought university as a place where young people are formed and shaped based on the principals of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the founder of the modern Turkish Republic. Moreover, they said that the university should raise a generation of well-rounded individuals and future leaders who are modern, secular, democratic, liberal, and rational. This finding indicates that beyond the three typical/generic functions of university (teaching, research and service), universities in the developing world should still be seen as the engines of modernization and of nation building. Although not strongly articulated up to now, a similar tone has now been put forward in the process of redefinition of universities' roles in the developed world. We will return to this in the following section.

Discussion and Conclusions

Some call the conditions of 1990s "postindustrial environments," and they are, by definition, unpredictable, uncertain, and threatening (Cameron & Tschirhart,1992). So to say, the early decades of this second millennium may bring more changes to the universities than their first, 1,000 years. Some of these changes will be wrenching (Casper,1996). The flow of information is so fast. Throughout the world, economies are being transformed. Social values are up for grabs. Political walls are falling. In the middle of this whirling change, no institution is immune. (Reed, 1993). As some developments clearly indicate in many parts of the world, these conditions have led educational systems and higher education organizations transform themselves in terms of strategy, policies, identity, role, mission and functions.

In this paper, we were interested more in the perception of a number of internal and external stakeholders' opinions on a large, prestigious, Turkish public university. Findings of our research indicate the following three clusters of information on the institution:

1. As the majority of the interviewees observe, the Middle East Technical University as a higher education institution in a developing country equally adheres to the universal role or mission definition of higher education, namely teaching, research and service. The order of these three functions or missions differ when put into the context of current or future (ideal) stature of the university, however teaching is seen as the most primary function of the university. This expectation does not contradict with the general public expectation in other parts of the world. We think teaching has always been a priority of higher education in elsewhere in the world as well. For example, structuring movement of the 1980s and the 1990s in various national higher education systems in the

world, especially North America and Europe, targeted the revitalization of teaching through quality enhancement mechanisms (Simsek, 1996).

2. In addition to these three generic missions or functions, internal and external stakeholders report that the Middle East Technical University should carry out two other missions or functions: Pioneering or leading role in terms of being the engine of development, innovation and problem solving in the country, and international or global orientation. Of the pioneering or leading role, there are similar developments in other parts of the world. The general argument hovers around the fact that universities throughout the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, by and large, downgraded their societal roles and drifted themselves from the societal problems. Now, the pendulum swings back. Especially the public higher education institutions are now made accountable of their operations, missions, roles and responsibilities to the society (Stauffer, 1990; Brandstrom and Franke-Wikberg, 1992; Langer, 1990). Representatives of major internal and external stakeholders of METU whom we interviewed assign a similar social role to the university.

Of the international or global role, our findings indicate that interest groups of a public university in Turkey are well aware of a global transformation in many respects, and they want their university to change itself. Majority of them believe that METU's current mission or functions involve an international/global orientation and they want this to continue. Globalization is an important item in the restructuring agenda of many universities in the US as well. For example, it is stated in the University of Minnesota's strategic plan that "the University's faculty, students, and staff are INTERNATIONAL citizens...University 2000 envisions the University of Minnesota as a GLOBAL, LAND-GRANT, RESEARCH UNIVERSITY..." (University of Minnesota, University 2000: A

Road Map to the 21st Century: capitals original). On the other hand, Groff (1997) categorizes the emerging university typologies into three groups: university, communiversity and globalversity which the latter explains an international orientation in terms of collaborative educational developments among nations.

3. On top of these five areas of mission and function, our results at METU indicate that interviewed people see the University as a place where young people are shaped and formed besides acquiring vocational skills and technical knowledge in a specific field. As we stated earlier, according to them, the university should develop necessary means to turn them into secular, modern, rational, enlightened, and creative individuals who are the followers of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk's principals of modern, secular Turkish Republic. This is clearly a social as well as a political mission assigned to the University. This is consistent with what Fincher stated that "a basic premise [of the university] should be that the education of leaders in the 21st century will not be a matter to be left to the whims of other institutions and agencies. The contemporary university has considerable expertise in the formal preparation of leadership in government, business, and various professional fields" (Fincher, 1993, p. 37).

So far, our research findings indicate that the Middle East Technical University is identified with six different mission and functions: teaching, research, service, pioneering or leading role for economic and social development, international/global function and a social/political function what we labeled the character development or formation. Overall, the accomplishment of these expectations create a serious challenge for even the well-developed institutions of the West. Many observers of the university organizations find these roles or functions often conflicting, perhaps this is why Clark Kerr once called the modern university "multiversity" (Kerr, 1982). It is very hard to predict whether the

Middle East Technical University will successfully carry out all these roles or functions ascribed by its most important stakeholders in the coming years.

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